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ABSTRACT

A joint program between Cuyahoga Community College and Links, Inc., a national organization of black women dedicated to civic, cultural, and educational activities, was implemented to help improve the test-taking skills of inner-city high school students and to help them build the skills needed to succeed in postsecondary education. A pilot school for the program was identified with the help of Cleveland Public School System Staff. Program responsibilities were shared by the two sponsors, and partial funding was obtained from a local foundation. The instructional approach involved faculty instruction, individual student study, and parent support to aid students in formulating study plans and in mastering the concepts used in standardized tests. The project had four phases: (1) program development, which included the identification of instructional objectives, the description of a model program, and preparation of materials; (2) program implementation, which included orientation and test preparation sessions in which 37 students participated; (3) program evaluation through a student attitude survey and a comparison of students' practice test scores and their official test scores; and (4) program dissemination, which was intended to culminate in the development of a model program. Although significant improvement in test scores could not be demonstrated, one result of the course was that instructors could analyze students' weaknesses in basic skills and help the students develop a plan for improvement. Appendices include curriculum outlines and student evaluations of the program. (HB)

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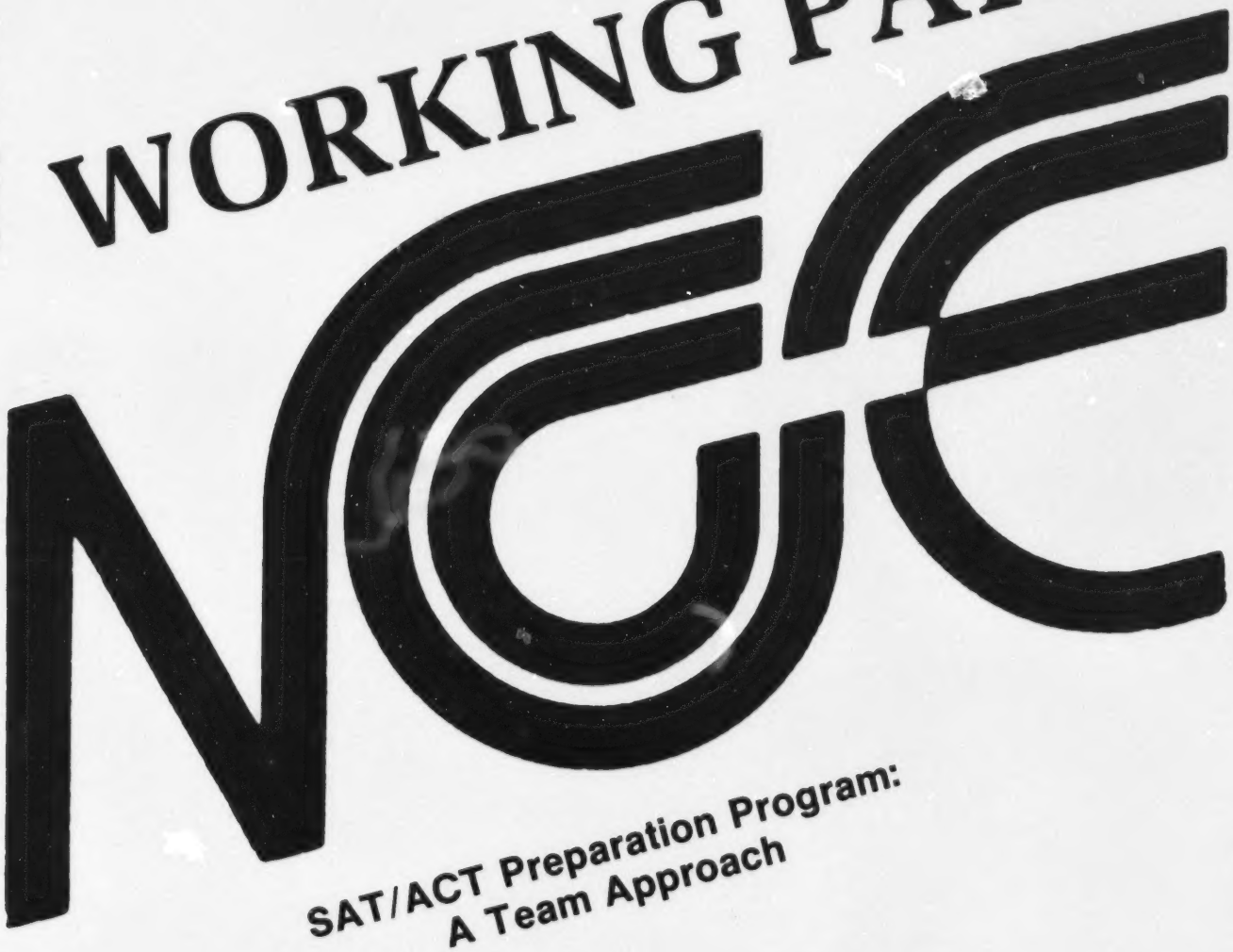

SAT/ACT Preparation Program: A Team Approach

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NCCSCE *Working Papers* Series

The *Working Papers Series* provides practitioners with information on programs and processes which they may adapt to their own needs. Each previous *Paper* has dealt with a program or service developed at a single institution which illustrated one educational approach to meeting a particular need.

This *Working Paper* presents a collaborative programming process in which the emphasis is on the *process*. Program descriptions serve primarily as illustrations of the process (although each is worthy of a *Paper* in itself). The program network described in this paper is statewide. Others who wish to try similar sharing may wish to begin on a regional basis within a state if a statewide network does not seem feasible. We believe the process which the Michigan community colleges have developed offers possibilities for using resources effectively to maintain high levels of creative programming with limited institutional staffs.

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SAT/ACT Preparation Programs: A Team Approach

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Program Rationale

Recent reports indicate that average SAT scores of minority youth are about 100 points lower than the national average. The susceptibility of SAT and ACT scores to improvement through coaching is often argued, but relatively affluent youth flock to preparation courses in order to assure themselves that they have done all they can to perform well. These scores mean admission to the colleges of the students' first choice and a chance to receive special scholarships. Inner-city youth, however, have generally not had access to the preparation courses because of insufficient money to pay the fees, inconvenient locations or lack of awareness.

Some studies indicate that preparation can significantly raise test scores. Professors Warner Slack and Douglas Porter of Harvard Medical School appraised 29 studies on the effects of coaching and found that claims that the SAT is not coachable are unfounded. ("Does Coaching Raise . . .?", 1980) A National Education Association team also analyzed test scores of students who took the PSAT and the SAT or who took the SAT twice, comparing the results of those who received coaching in-between tests with those who did not. The researchers found that the improvement in scores for the groups receiving coaching was more than twice that of the uncoached group. ("Does Coaching Raise . . .?", 1980). Such studies are encouraging to those trying to help minority or inner-city youth enlarge their educational opportunities.

Because of its special interest in encouraging young people, members of the Cleveland Chapter of Links, Inc., approached Cuyahoga Community College representatives with the idea of developing a test preparation program for inner-city high school students. After identifying a high school whose principal and counselors were interested in helping to implement a pilot program, the College staff agreed to lead the project.

The program sponsors were aware that a short preparation program might have limited results in terms of raising test scores. However, the program was designed to help students become more comfortable with testing situations in general and to become aware of their own scholastic strengths and weaknesses. In this way, the test preparation program could be developed as the starting point of an academic enrichment program which would eventually enable students both to raise their test scores and to build the skills they will need to succeed in post-secondary education.

The Sponsors

The Links, Inc. is a national organization of black women dedicated to the promotion of civic, cultural, and educational activities. The Cleveland Chapter has taken a special interest in youth and has sponsored educational programs in Cleveland high schools, an enrichment program at the Cleveland Job Corp Center, a drug abuse program for youth, and recognition awards to outstanding high school graduates.

Cuyahoga Community College is committed to helping high school youth overcome barriers to higher education. It works collaboratively with high schools and with community organizations in

providing demonstration programs in career development, science, cultural events, and other educational activities which introduce youngsters to a college environment.

The Cleveland Public School System cooperates with colleges and community groups to enhance students' educational opportunities. Its staff worked with the sponsors of this program by publicizing the program and making it available to its students. Enthusiastic support was given by school personnel who assisted both in identifying students for the program and in obtaining information for evaluation of its results.

Division of Responsibilities

A major success in this program was the manner in which the sponsoring organizations, and units within these organizations, divided responsibilities and worked together to bring the program to successful fruition. The local Links, Inc. chapter members identified the need and initiated contact with Cuyahoga Community College as the agency most likely to be able to work with them to address the problem. Planners from both groups agreed that involvement of Cleveland Public School staff was essential in order to effectively work with the students. Hence, both Links and Cuyahoga Community College representatives made informal contacts which resulted in the identification of a pilot school whose principal and counselors were anxious to participate in this project.

After the organizations agreed to work together, each carried out its unique functions. Within the College, responsibilities were divided between the Office of Community Services, which handled administrative leadership, and the faculty team, led by a counselor, which provided instructional leadership. Once the planning group delineated the resources needed for curriculum development, instruction, and evaluation, it was clear that about $4,000 of outside funds would be required. The Director of Community Services, with the aid of other team members, identified two local foundations whose past giving indicated an interest in educational programs for inner-city youth. With letters of support from the Links and public school leadership, a proposal went forth, and Links and College representatives maintained personal contact with the two foundations. When the Nathan Dauby Charity Fund approved partial funding, the Links provided a portion of the remaining funds needed, and the College increased its contribution. The Office of Community Services then managed the grant expenditures and reporting.

After the funds were assured, others involved in the project intensified their activities. The faculty team began its developmental phase which involved analyzing the tests, designing instructional sessions and preparing materials. The school personnel identified the students they felt would benefit from the program and would be motivated to participate. The Links began planning an orientation for parents and transportation for students who would have difficulty coming to the College for the fall test preparation sessions which were to take place on Saturday mornings. The Links also agreed to help the instructors during the coaching sessions and to host a "graduation" program at the end of the program. Thus each organization had a clearly-defined role to play in the project. Each role was essential to implementing the program which the team designed, and each group took a responsibility that it was uniquely able to fulfill.

Instructional Approach

The Test Preparation Program employed a learning strategy that involved both faculty instruction and individual student study. Instructors taught students to identify and master the concepts contained in the SAT and ACT examinations and also assisted students in formulating their personal study plans to be used in preparing for the exams. Parent involvement in supporting the test-preparation efforts of these students was stressed. The entire project was viewed as having four phases: development, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination.

Program Development

During the summer of 1982, the five member faculty team spent three Saturdays developing this program. The team was headed by a counselor/program designer and included Cuyahoga Community College faculty with proven expertise in the following areas: verbal skills, mathematics, science, and social studies. The first outcome of the development sessions was identification of the instructional objectives as follows:

1. To acquaint students with the learning concepts contained in the academic aptitude tests they plan to complete.

2. To assist students to analyze their strengths and weaknesses regarding the learning concepts contained in tests of academic aptitude they plan to complete.
3. To teach students how to improve their understanding of concepts in which they demonstrate a need for strengthening.
4. To teach test-taking techniques students can use to strengthen their performance on academic aptitude tests.

Other outcomes of the working sessions were:

1. The description of a program model.
2. Lessons which provided:
   a. An analysis of the concepts tested in the SAT and ACT instruments (Appendices A-D).
   b. Presentation and discussion of concepts tested by the SAT and ACT;
   c. Directions for home practice; and
   d. Practice tests
3. Preparation of materials for program lessons including:
   a. Specified student learning outcomes;
   b. Slides, charts, and other visual aids to assist in lesson presentations.

The team approach encouraged the development among the faculty members of a philosophy, common study directions, and knowledge of each other's plans and expectations.

Program Implementation

The College counselor at East High School identified the students who were interested and available to take the course. Their counselor and the Links each provided written invitations for these students to participate in the coming sessions. Originally the planning group sought twenty-five students, but thirty-seven students wished to participate and were accepted.

The Program took place in two stages:

Stage #1 - Orientation: During this stage the Links and the CCC faculty team explained to students and their parents the purpose of the test preparation program and the methods to be used in teaching students how to prepare for academic aptitude tests. Parents attended an orientation program at the College's Metropolitan Campus on Saturday morning, September 11, 1982 to hear about the program, to see the environment, and to meet the staff. Members of the Links gave greetings and discussed the background of the program. Links members also offered transportation to the class sessions for those needing this service. The test preparation faculty team leader described the curriculum and the home study required and stressed the importance of parental support for their youngsters. A brochure was prepared to provide basic information about the dates, personnel, sponsors, and purposes of the program. The Links served refreshments during the informal discussion period which followed. About forty parents attended this session.

On September 14, the staff met with the students at East High School. Again the faculty team leader gave a preview of the course content. The students asked many questions and confirmed their interest in the program. They received directions for reaching the College site of the program. Those needing transportation were identified, and Link members arranged rides for them.

Stage #2 - Test Preparation Sessions: On September 18, the test preparation sessions began on the downtown Metropolitan Campus. While all students were encouraged to attend all classes, there were two sessions especially designed for those planning to take the SAT and four designed for those preparing for the ACT. (The English sessions for the two tests were held at two different times. The math sessions overlapped). Most students attended the full program, which was scheduled as follows:

September 18:	9:00 a.m. - Noon	SAT/ACT Math Unit
September 25:	9:00 a.m. - Noon	ACT English Usage Unit
	1:00 p.m. - 3:50 p.m.	SAT Verbal Unit
October 2:	9:00 a.m. - Noon	ACT Natural Science Unit
October 9:	9:00 a.m. - Noon	ACT Social Studies Unit

The format for each session was similar. At the beginning, the instructor administered a sample SAT or ACT examination (ACT Assessment, 1981; 5 SATS, 1981). With the help of the instructor, the students scored their own tests. Instructors then described the concepts on which the students needed further study. The instructors provided explanations of key concepts and taught students how

to apply this knowledge in practice questions. Students received resource lists so that they could continue to work on their own. The instructors stressed home study as an integral part of the test-preparation process and encouraged students to seek help from their high school teachers on concepts with which they had difficulty.

Thirty-five of the thirty-seven students who participated in this test preparation project continued until its completion. They received certificates at the program which followed the last class session on October 9, hosted by the Links and the College. According to East High School officials, a total of thirty students who participated in this program subsequently completed official ACT and/or SAT examinations.

Evaluation

The program evaluation had two components. One was an attitude survey in which students responded to statements concerning their judgement of the value of the program. The other was a comparison of the students' practice test scores and their official ACT and SAT scores.

The original plan for the pre-post comparison of SAT scores called for comparing PSAT and SAT scores of members of the pilot group, who would take the preparation course before taking the SAT test, with the scores of control group members from another school who would not take the course. This plan could not be implemented in the manner described because too few students at either school took the PSAT. Instead, the practice tests given in class were used as the pre-test, and the same tests were administered to a control group at a different school. The actual SAT and ACT tests constituted the post-tests. However, few students in the control group took the SAT and/or ACT; thus, the data available were sparse. No significant test-score difference could be shown on the basis of this comparison.

In the survey, students responded enthusiastically to the course and strongly recommended that it be offered to others (Appendix E). In their responses to the attitude questionnaire:

1. Most students (57%) said they feel very anxious when they take a test.
2. Most students (81%) reported that the Test Preparation Course helped them to feel less anxious about taking the college entrance examinations.
3. Most students (95%) said that the instruction in the course definitely helped them to better understand how to take tests.
4. Most students (67%) believe their study habits in the past were good and most students believe the ACT/SAT Test Preparation course helped them to improve their study habits.
5. Most students (85%) said they learned some concepts in this course they had not mastered in high school classes.
6. The overwhelming majority of students (95%) who participated in this course believed the instruction in concepts was the important element in the course.
7. The overwhelming majority of students (95%) said they would recommend the ACT/SAT Prep Course to a friend.

Toward a Model Program

The pilot ACT/SAT Preparation Program was well-received by the students who participated, although significant test score improvement could not be demonstrated. One result of the course was that instructors could analyze the students' weaknesses in basic skills and help the students develop a plan for improvement. It seems evident, however, that a longer period of instruction is necessary to show meaningful basic skills improvement. Thus, as the program development continues, the SAT/ACT Preparation will serve as the initial, motivating element of a one to two year academic skills enrichment program.

In the future, the SAT/ACT Preparation Program will be targeted for 10th and 11th grade students who will be encouraged to take the PSAT and the ACT at an early date. Students will then be encouraged to enroll in the College's credit-in-escrow program whereby they may take regular college courses and bank the credits earned until they enter a degree program. Those who are able to take college-level courses will be able to transfer the credits if they so desire.

The preparation course instructors will help students use their practice tests to analyze concepts on which they need further help. Through their credit-in-escrow courses, students will be able to work on their skills - particularly English and math - so as to gain significantly by the time they take the SAT and ACT again. Even more important, the credit-in-escrow college experience and the skills improvement the students achieve will enhance their ability to perform well in college and to remain

for successful completion of their studies.

The credit-in-escrow program at Cuyahoga Community College operates the year round. A special fund has been created to provide financial assistance for needy students. During the school year students are generally limited to one course per term and must usually have a B average. In this case, since the classes will be complementary to the high school curriculum, some leeway on the grade-point average may be desirable. During the summer special tutors and counselors are often available for additional support. Thus, it will be possible for students to spend up to a year and a half at CCC before leaving high school and entering College. During this period, they will have an opportunity to make significant improvement in academic skills.

A second change being considered is that College staff will move toward training test preparation instructors rather than conducting all the classes themselves. Ideally, each high school will have a test preparation instructional team which will have received training both in the test preparation curriculum and in counseling students into the College credit-in-escrow program.

Parent orientation and support is expected to continue and will involve on-going participation of Links members. This has proved to be a positive experience for all concerned and could develop, at a future date, into a means to help parents enter the community college system to develop their own skills.

The collaboration of the community college, the school district, the community organization, and the parents has resulted in a dynamic and productive test preparation process. Further program development will emphasize the continuation and strengthening of this mutual effort.

The project staff will be happy to share additional information about the program. To learn more about administrative issues, contact Dr. Rae Rohfeld, Cuyahoga Community College, 4250 Richmond Road, Cleveland, Ohio 44122; (216) 292-2268. For more detail about curriculum materials and instruction, contact Dr. Major Harris, Cuyahoga Community College, 2900 Community College Avenue, Cleveland, Ohio 44115: (216) 348-4278.

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APPENDIX A
Attachment
Curriculum Outline

Subject: Mathematics Usage

Concept Represented in Test Items	Test Items		
	ACT		SAT
		Sect.2	Sect.5
1. **Arithmetic:**			
Manipulation of units of measurement	1		25
Recognizing and extending patterns	4	1, 6, 15 17,	3, 5, 12, 14, 35
Solving percent problems	5, 25	24,	6,
Adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing fractions	7, 2, 12, 14, 35	2, 21	8, 35
Recognizing and using frequently used formulas	2, 8, 17, 20	1, 21	6, 15
Use of graduated (weighted) tables	9		26
Finding the balance due or the sale price	23		22, 26
Simplifying expressions involving decimals	9, 23	3,	26
2. **Beginning Algebra:**			
Simplifying polynomial expressions	6, 10		1, 18, 27
Solving problems using the Pythagorean Theorem	11, 31	23, 25	
Knowledge of the properties of real numbers	13		5, 17, 23
Knowledge of the properties of sets	33		12
Facility with elementary probability concepts	34		24
Solving problems involving logarithms	37		
Solving quadratic equations	17, 21, 38	11	
Knowledge of and ability to use the formula for deriving the slope of a line passing through two points.	39		
Ability to solve equations involving radicals	18, 26, 40		
Ability to solve a system of equations			7, 16, 28
3. **Intermediate Algebra:**			
Recognition and use of scientific notation	21		
Finding the distance between two points given their coordinates	26		
Recognition of and use of common formulas	27	11, 21, 23, 25	33
Solving problems involving ratios and proportions	28	22	
Solving problems involving absolute value	29		
Recognition and use of functional notation	30		

4. **Geometry:**			
Recognizing common geometrical figures and their properties	2, 16, 17, 20, 32	5, 11, 13 21, 23, 25	2, 4, 9, 13, 20, 21, 33, 34
Recognizing and using the properties of parallel lines cut by a transversal	3		
Knowledge of the properties of a right triangle	31		
Knowledge of and the ability to use the properties of similar triangles	36	13	
Setting up and solving linear equations	8, 15	4, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 17, 18, 20, 24	10
Recognizing and using the Cartesian Coordinate System	16, 19, 26		19
Setting up and solving quadratic equations	21, 31	9	
Recognize and use frequently used square roots and cube roots	24	11, 16	1, 11, 16
Using ratios and proportions concepts to solve problems	36	19	
Graphing linear relations	19		
Simplifying radical expressions	31		

APPENDIX B

Attachment
Curriculum Outline

Subject: English

Concept Represented in Test Items	**Test Items**
1. Recognizing standard written English	ACT
a. Parts of speech	
b. Language usage	
2. Identifying word relationships accurately	PSAT
3. Reading passage effectively	PSAT
	ACT
4. Recognizing effective, written expression	ACT
5. Determining consistent style and tone	ACT

APPENDIX C-1

Attachment
Curriculum Outline

Subject: Natural Sciences

Concept Represented in Test Items	Test Items
1. *Physics* Experimental Radioactivity	26, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50
Thermodynamics	11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19
Electric Current	20
Kinetic Molecular Theory	22
2. *Biology* Experimental	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10
Anatomy	24
Hematology	34
3. Astronomy Stellar Evolution	37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43
Hertzprung-Russell Diagram	35, 36
Physical Properties of planets	31
4. *Chemistry* Gas Laws	12, 14, 16, 21
Reactions	29
Periodic Law	30
Organic	32
5. *Geology* Minerals	23
Rock Cycle	27
6. *Scientific Method*	25

APPENDIX C-2

Individual Cognitive Test Strategies

1. Read the question carefully and understand what is being asked.
2. If question refers to other material, written or drawn, then relate those key words or related concepts to similar ones in the answers.
3. If the question is not associated with other material, then relate key words in the question to similar or key words in the answers.
4. As you answer test items see if there is a trend or test style. (ACT several questions have two answers obviously wrong and two close to the correct answers, however remember only one is exactly correct.)
5. Experimental questions, with several separate parts, have the same sequence of letter answers for each part. (Ept. 1 ques. 1 a, b, c, d - ques. 2 e, f, g, h etc.)
6. If none of the above strategies apply to the question, and even if they do, always apply rational deductions. (If the question mentions 3 gidgets and 4 midgets you cannot have more than 7 of everything.)
7. The scientific method is more specifically applicable to experimental type questions, but is generally applicable to all questions.
8. The basic components of the Scientific Method are:
    a) Objective
    (Precise and exact understanding of the question)

b) Collection of Data
(Pertinent to the Objective)
c) Organization and Evaluation of Data.
(Classifying and relating, then forming a hypothesis)
d) Testing or Experimenting Hypothesis
(Comparison of possible answers)
e) Conclusion and Summary
(Determining on basis of fact which is best answer)

APPENDIX D

Attachment
Curriculum Outline

Subject: Social Studies Reading

	Concept Represented in Test Items	**Test Items**
1.	Isolating responses that are most different from other choices	7, 8, 18, 43
2.	Determining when choices are similar and/or accurate	32
3.	Answering questions that are explicitly asked and not to rely on assumptions	34, 49
4.	Using objectivity and avoiding the use of ethnocentricity or subjectivity	29
5.	Searching for and isolating facts, terms, events and ideologies	39, 42, 43
6.	Responding to broadly stated questions	46
7.	Identifying facts in paragraphs	50, 51
8.	Handling questions where clarity is needed	19, 22

Note: Supplemental curriculum outlines and student resource lists for additional study may be obtained from the authors.

APPENDIX-E

Cuyahoga Community College
Cleveland Chapter, Links, Inc.
SAT/ACT Preparation Course
EVALUATION SUMMARY

1. Strongly Disagree 2. Disagree Somewhat 3. Don't Know
4. Agree Somewhat 5. Strongly Agree

A	**Strongly Disagree**	1	2	3	4	5	**Strongly Agree**
1. I scored higher than I expected on my practice tests at the test preparations sessions.			4	5	11	1	
2. I get very anxious when I have to take a test.		1	2		15	3	
3. This program helped me become less anxious than I was about taking the college entrance exams.		1	1	2	10	7	

4.	My study habits in the past have usually been good.	1	3	3	8	6
5.	The instruction in this program helped me understand better how to take tests.		1		6	14
6.	This course helped me improve my study habits.			3	8	10
7.	This program made me more anxious about the college-entrance tests than I was before.	2	2	6	4	7
8.	In this course I learned some concepts in the subjects that were taught (English, math, natural science, social science,) that I had not mastered in my high school classes.		1	2	7	10
9.	This program gave me an idea of what it might be like to attend college.	1		4	8	8

B	Not Important					Very Important
	1	2	3	4	5	
1. Taking and scoring practice test.		2	1	6	12	
2. Identification of concepts being tested.			3	5	13	
3. Instruction in concepts found in test.			1	8	12	
4. Instruction in PQRST study method.			10	6	4	

Yes or No

C	Yes	No
1. Did you take the P.S.A.T?	10	11
2. Was your parent able to attend the parent orientation?	11	10
3. Did you use any of the recommended resources in your school?	10	11
4. How many class sessions did you attend at CCC? (Consider the English a.m. and p.m. sessions as 2 separate classes.)	1 2 3 4 5	
	1 5 6 10	
5. Would you recommend this course to a friend?	20	1
6. Did you change any of your plans as a result of attending this program?	6	15

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